

PART II Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility, and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys, and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains, and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands, and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan, and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British, and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan, and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capitol in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1853, with a capitol at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at that time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; large volumes of lumber and wheat were being exported by ship and rail. Many land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe, who took up lumbering, fishing, mining, and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (142,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000), and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

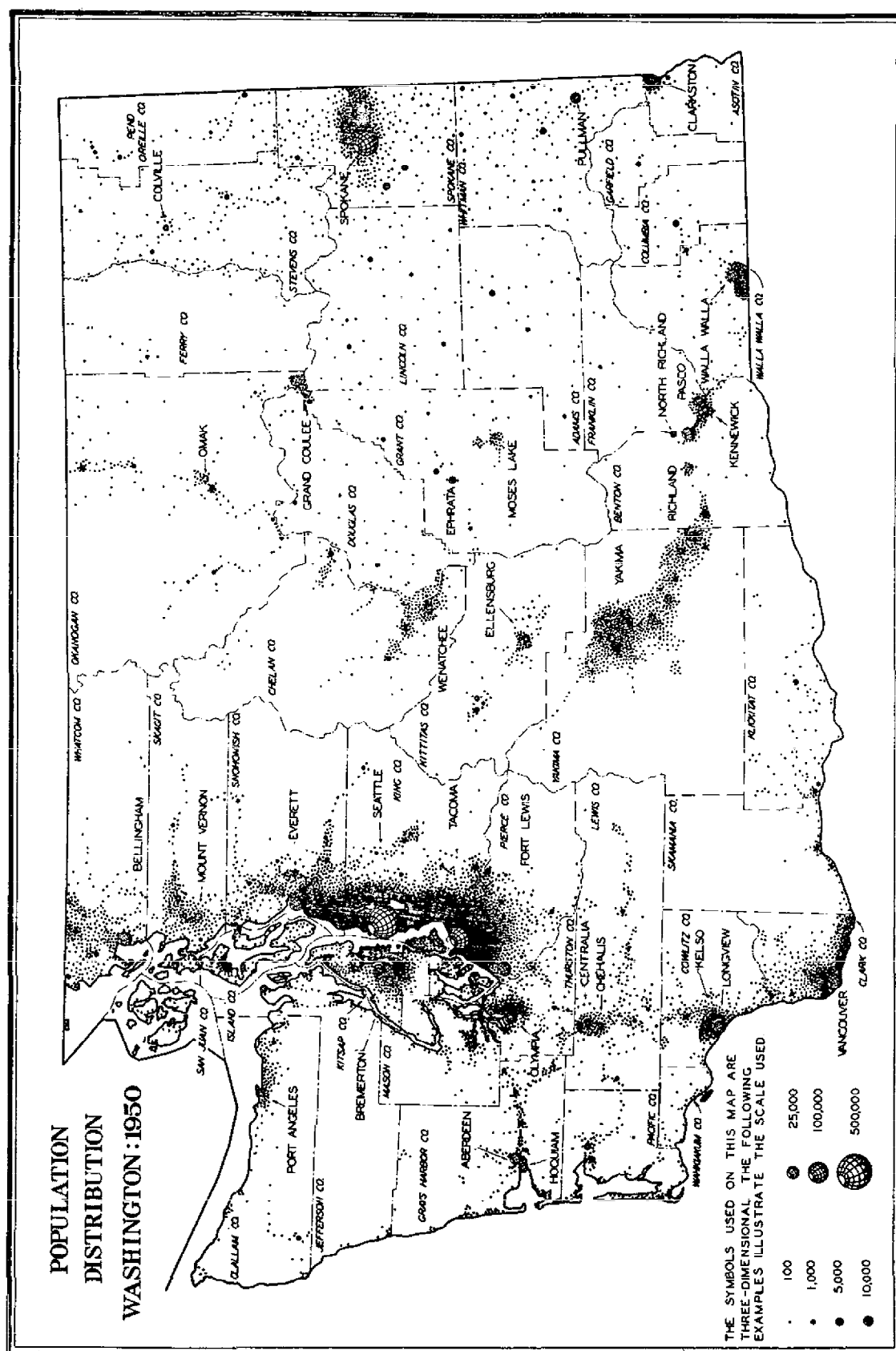
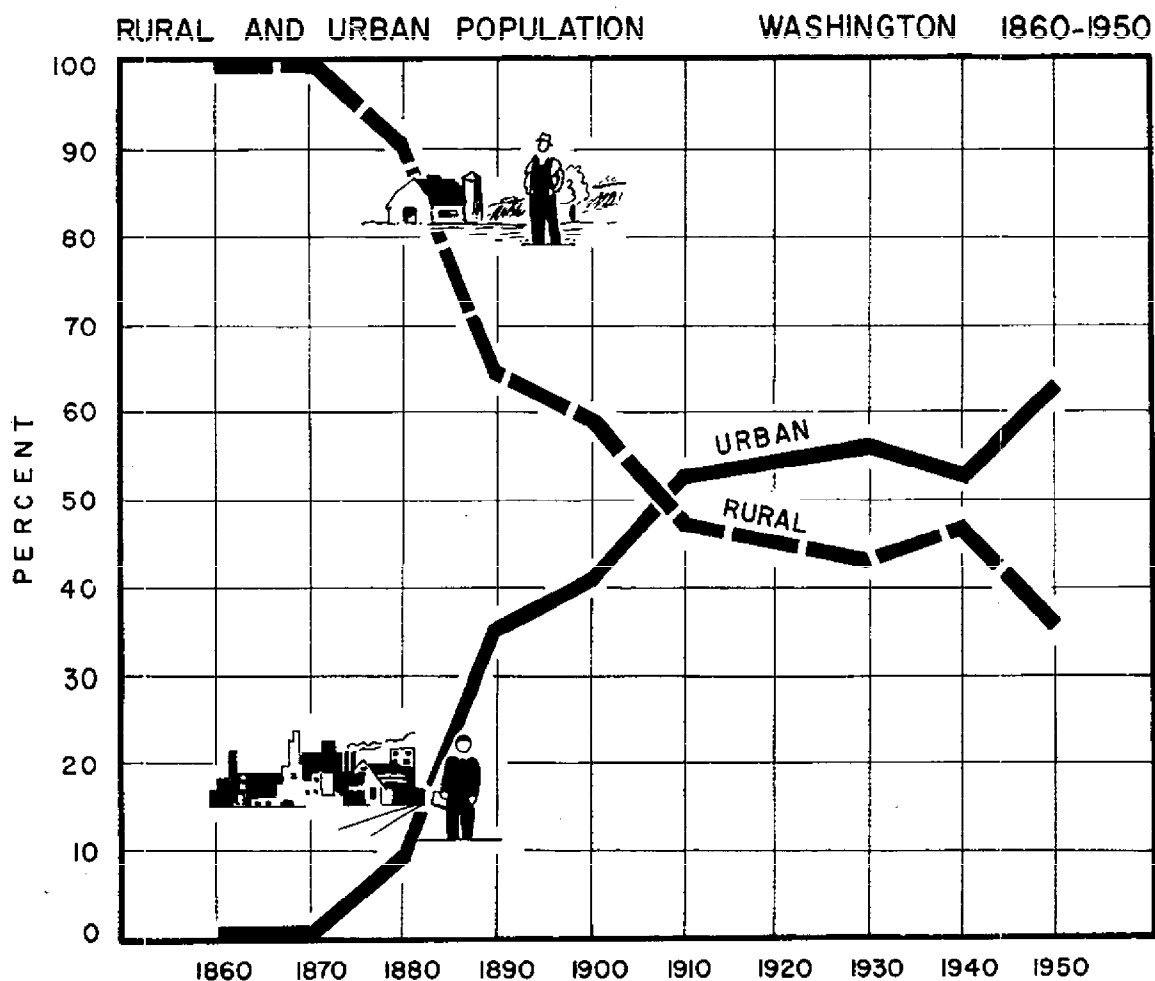
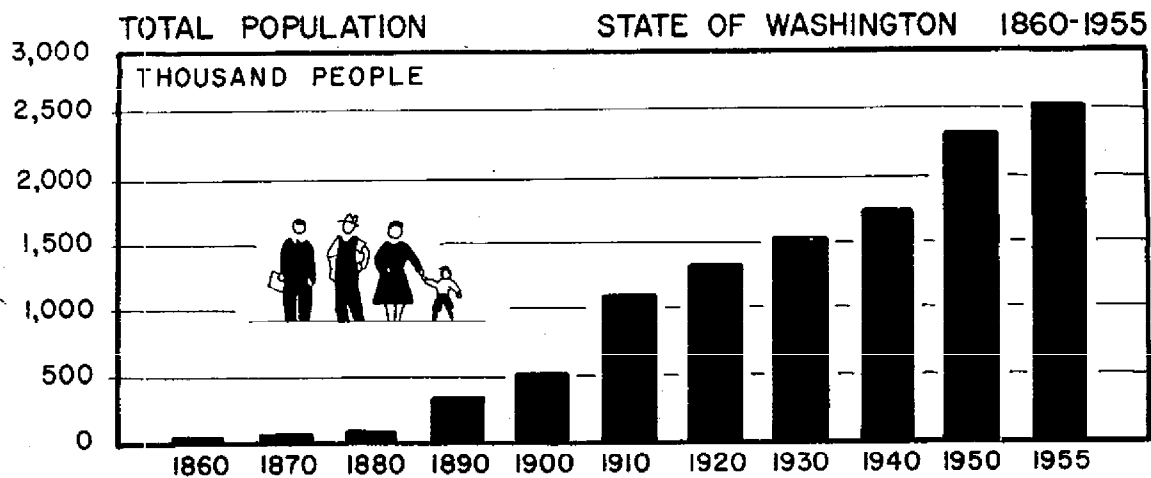


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE.

V J K

The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark, and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.-- Population of Washington
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;
Washington State Census
Board, April 1, 1955
Estimate.

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771, or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (34,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400), and Longview (23,500).

Population of Pierce County

The population of Pierce County has shown steady growth since the Census of 1860. With considerable industry and commerce concentrated at Tacoma and Puyallup, the population is over one-half urban. In 1955 an estimated 173,250 persons were living within cities of 2,500 and larger. Another 127,550 were classified as rural, living in towns and villages, along highways, in suburbs and on farms. The rural farm population, persons living on and operating farms, was only 5.5 percent. Only 15,173 persons or about 5 out of each 100 residents in Pierce County lived on farms, according to the 1950 Census. Since 1920 the trend has been for more people to take up rural residences and small farms

Table 2.- Population of Pierce County
1860-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	1,115	100	0
1870	1,049	100	0
1880	3,319	100	0
1890	50,940	29.4	70.6
1900	55,515	32.1	67.9
1910	120,812	27.0	73.0
1920	144,127	28.4	71.6
1930	163,842	30.5	69.5
1940	182,081	35.6	64.4
1950	275,876	42.6	57.4
1955 ^{1/}	300,800	42.4	57.6

^{1/} 1955 data are estimates of Washington State Census Board.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population, 1860-1950.
Washington State Census Board, 1955 estimates.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Pierce County, 1910-1955

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1955 ^{1/}
Bonney Lake	--	--	--	--	275	421
Buckley	1,272	1,119	1,052	1,170	2,705	3,325
Carbonado	--	--	--	--	412	410
Dupont	--	--	--	--	--	353
Eatonville	754	861	912	996	1,048	1,000
Firecrest	--	--	441	486	1,459	2,487
Gig Harbor	--	--	--	--	803	929
Milton	448	484	559	671	1,374	1,758
Orting	799	972	1,109	1,211	1,299	1,285
Puyallup	4,544	6,323	7,094	7,889	10,010	10,825
Roy	315	287	284	261	263	241
Rustin	780	1,128	818	739	838	735
South Prairie	264	215	204	226	207	205
Steilacoom	430	564	722	832	1,233	1,304
Sumner	892	1,499	1,967	2,140	2,816	3,000
Tacoma	83,743	96,965	106,817	109,408	143,673	156,000
Wilkeson	899	803	448	369	386	390

^{1/} Populations for 1955 are estimates by the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1955.

Sources: U. S. Census, Population.
Washington State Census Board.

within commuting distance of Tacoma and other Puget Sound cities. This is indicated by a rise in the proportion of rural population from 28.4 percent in 1920 to 42.4 percent in 1955.

With the exception of some mining and lumbering sites in the interior foothill section, all the incorporated cities and villages of Pierce County have grown during the last 45 years. Carbonado, Wilkeson and South Prairie in the coal fields lost population when the coal industry declined. Decreased sawmill work caused slight loss of population in recent years at Eatonville, Roy and Orting. The primary farming centers, Puyallup and Sumner, and the industrial and suburban area in and about Tacoma have doubled in population since 1910.

Pierce County has been a melting pot of many immigrants from foreign lands. In 1920 over one-fifth of the population was from foreign countries. As a source of immigrants, Norway, Sweden, Canada, England and Germany have led all others. The Scandinavian population (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) numbered 10,402 in 1920 and 6,533 in 1950. The percentage of foreign-born white population has decreased as a result of the limited and controlled European emigration to America since 1920. In addition to the nationalities in Table 4, the 1950 Census tabulated 1,216 American Indians, third largest number by county in the state. The second largest American-Japanese population in the state, 665 persons, also live in Pierce County. American Negroes numbered 6,111

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, Pierce County,
1890, 1920 and 1950

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales...	2,204	2,733	1,940
Scotland.....	603	872	573
Northern Ireland....	--	--	16
Ireland (Eire).....	1,362	1,077	502
Norway.....	1,992	5,036	3,371
Sweden.....	2,418	4,480	2,650
Denmark.....	661	986	512
Netherlands.....	56	102	165
Switzerland.....	232	619	--
France.....	193	272	173
Germany.....	3,086	2,714	1,831
Poland.....	23	756	507
Czechoslovakia.....	67	--	331
Austria.....	233	1,096	744
Yugoslavia.....	--	811	557
Russia (U.S.S.R.)...	255	926	963
Finland.....	--	839	483
Italy.....	172	1,707	1,252
Canada-French.....	--	241	248
Canada-Other.....	2,884	3,897	4,089
All other countries.	376	1,876	2,085
Totals	16,817	31,040	22,992
Percent foreign-born	33.0	21.5	8.3

Source: U.S. Census, Population.

in 1950, nearly all of whom lived in Tacoma, being employed in manufacturing and service industries.

Agriculture ranked only seventh in employment in 1950 according to the Census. There were 83,037 employed workers of which the largest group, 18,319, were working in manufacturing industries, followed closely by 17,690 in retail and wholesale stores. Only 3,656 persons were supported by wages and salaries paid by farmers or by income from self-employment on farms.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population
Pierce County, 1950.

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	59,882	23,155	83,037
Agriculture.....	3,040	616	3,656
Forestry and fisheries.....	557	38	595
Mining.....	188	4	192
Construction.....	6,377	154	6,531
Manufacturing.....	15,997	2,322	18,319
Transportation.....	5,487	395	5,882
Retail and wholesale stores.....	11,286	6,404	17,690
Miscellaneous services.....	9,689	10,293	19,982
Public administration (government employment).....	4,834	1,801	6,635
Other employment.....	2,427	1,128	3,555

Source: U.S. Census, Population, 1950.